

# THE

# COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

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## MISCELLANEOUS RUMBLINGS, RAMBLINGS AND REPORTS FROM THE EDITOR.

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The Summer Doldrums are with us again - this is a situation that we have come to recognize and expect over the years - and during this period the incoming mail drops off almost to zero which makes it very difficult to put together an issue of CNL. So please remember that we need your letters and articles - your questions and comments - if we are to continue.

To our Patrons who may want to pursue the background of Abel Buell in greater depth - Mr. William Lockwood - Director of Wesleyan University Press - advises us that Dr. Wroth's book "Abel Buell of

Connecticut" is still in print and available from them at \$ 7.00 per copy. Their address is 100 Riverview Center, Middletown, Connecticut 06457. In addition - we are advised by Mr. Raymond Williamson that color reproductions of the Buell map "The First American Map of the United States, by Abel Buell, 1784" are available from American Heritage Publishing Company Catalogue Department, P.O.Box 1776, Marion, Ohio 43302. Item number 509 - the price is \$ 3.00 per copy. This reproduction - reduced in size from the original - includes a history of the map on the reverse.

We urgently need to build up our backlog of material for publication - so please drop us a few lines or so with your comments, questions, suggestions and articles. We expect to summarize very soon the correspondence we have received on the Research Forum question RF-31 "Connecticut Coppers Mint Locations" which appeared in the March 1970 issue of CNL (sequential page 298). Those of you who have inputs but have not yet written - please send us your thoughts on this subject. Also - Bob Vlack has advised us that he expects to complete his series on "The French Colonies Sous of 1767" before the year is out as well as his article on the VOCE POPULI coinage, so we really have something to look forward to next year. If it is agreeable with Bob we will collect all the French Colonies material together in one package - the plates and descriptions are now so scattered throughout the issues that they are very difficult to use.

A rough draft of our cumulative index is complete - we hope to have it in final form and printed about mid-1973. Some new Research Forum questions are included in this issue - please let us know your thoughts on these questions as well as those printed in the earlier issues - we never consider any of these questions as closed - things just do not work that way in the area of early American numismatics - there is always something new to be uncovered.

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JCS



## The RESEARCH FORUM



Several new inputs to the Research Forum are tabulated below. Please drop us a line with your comments, observations or ideas on these questions. Every little scrap of data is of help to our Patrons doing research in these areas.

## RF-36 Connecticut Coppers Overstruck on New Jersey Coppers

Can anyone identify the varieties of Connecticut coppers overstruck on New Jersey coppers as reported by C.H.Hawley on page nine of his article "Auctori Connec and the Fugios" published by the Hartford Numismatic Society in 1959 ? (The Hobby Press; Richardson, Texas).

## RF-37 Did Abel Buell Actually Have a Son Named William?

The exploits of William Buell, son of Abel Buell, are numismatic legend; however, in his meticulously documented biography "Abel Buell of Connecticut", Dr. Lawrence C.Wroth does not even indicate the existence of a son named William! Is it possible that Benjamin and William Buell, considered as brothers, were actually the same individual?

## RF-38 A Rhode Island Mint ?

Scraps of evidence pop up from time to time to suggest that a mint was in operation in Rhode Island between the years 1782 and 1789. Can anyone identify the location, the persons involved, or the products of this operation ?

## RF-39 FUGIO "Rusted Dies" for Variety 13-X.

On at least two occasions the New Netherlands Coin Company has mentioned specimens of Fugio variety 13-X "struck from rusted dies". This first notation was in Lot 489 of the June 13-15, 1967 auction; another in the December 3-4, 1968 (60th) auction, Lot 462 "reverse die quite rusty; both dies broken". Can either of these two specimens be located today for study and analysis.?

## RF-40 FUGIO 105-FF "New Haven" ?

A Silver Restrike (Newman) 105-FF is illustrated as Lot 622 of Stack's auction of April 2-3, 1971 and further states that it was illustrated in the December 1969 issue of The Colonial Newsletter, but that issue identifies the specimen as a Douglas 96-VV. Which is it ?

## A REMARKABLE PRODUCT of MACHIN'S MILLS.

(TN-35)

- William J. Wild  
Brooklyn, New York



Illustrated above is a double struck Vermont Copper of 1785, the extremely rare Ryder 1 VERMON AUCTORI muled with 1785 IMMUNE COLUMBIA. This unusual specimen is probably unique. It shows a full 1785 date and the tops of a second 1785 date.

The background and history of these two dies is in itself a remarkable story.

The need for a mint in the colonies was one of numerous grievances against England for many years, culminating in the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution of 1776.

Plans for a mint were formulated more than a decade before a single coin was struck. The Articles of Confederation dated July 9, 1778 stated that the "United States in Congress assembled shall . . . have the sole and exclusive right and power of regulating the alloy and value of coin struck by their own authority or that of the respective states." Unless the states continued individually to mint their own coinage, this proposition presupposed the existence of a National Mint.

The subject of a National Mint for the United States was introduced by Robert Morris, the patriot and financier of the Revolution, in 1782. He submitted to Congress a series of pattern pieces in silver designed by Benjamin Dudley to carry out Gouverneur Morris' (Asst. Financier of the Confederation) decimal idea for U.S. money. These are known as Nova Constellatio Patterns and consist of the Mark, Quint and Bit. Thomas Jefferson believed the dollar was already as familiar and convenient as the British pound and advocated the simple Dollar Unit as we know it today. Congress gave formal approval in 1785 to his suggestion and the Mark, Quint and Bit remain today as patterns.

A series of copper Nova Constellatios, however, similar in design to the rejected 1783 silver patterns but bearing no denomination, were struck off in Birmingham, England, the dies being cut by Thomas Wyon and bearing the dates 1783, 1785 and a few dated 1786. Little is known of their history but they are believed to have been a private business venture of Gouverneur Morris.

Thomas Wyon, the English diecutter, anticipated further contracts with the United States and began making dies. The earliest of these dies was the 1785 IMMUNE COLUMBIA, meaning free America. This die comes muled with three different

Nova reverses: (1) Nova Constellatio pointed rays in silver and copper, (2) Nova Constelatio with star in border in copper, and (3) Nova Constelatio blunt rays in copper and a single specimen in gold now reposing in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.. These combinations were never adapted and remain as patterns.

The 1785 IMMUNE COLUMBIA die was evidently brought over to America by Walter Mould, an employee of Thomas Wyon at the Birmingham mint, in 1786 -- the year in which he was to receive employment at the Morristown, New Jersey mint. When Mould's contract expired in 1788, his minting equipment and the 1785 IMMUNE COLUMBIA die came into the hands of Thomas Machin at his mint located at New Grange, Ulster County, now Newburgh, New York.

The obverse die with head of George III and proper Vermont legend was evidently produced by James F. Atlee for regular Vermont use, but it was never so used. The punches intended for imitation British halfpence were diverted to Vermont dies when the Machin's Mills agreement was made in June of 1787. The Vermont coiners so desperately needed the tools, punches and diemaking services of James F. Atlee (who had joined the Machin's Mills group) that they were willing to give up 60% of the profits from their franchise and to decorate their coins with the bust of the King against whom they had fought to obtain their freedom. Because there was no particular head specified for the obverse under the Vermont law, the George III puncheon (made for the imitation halfpence) was lawfully usable so long as the proper legend was added.

There were two rare mulings produced by Thomas Machin's "Manufactory of Hardware" at Newburgh that involved the 1785 IMMUNE COLUMBIA die. One was the Ryder 1 which we have discussed, and the other was the GEORGE III REX with the IMMUNE.

- REFERENCES: (1) S.S.Crosby, "The Early Coins of America"; Boston, 1875  
(2) Eric P. Newman, "A Recently Discovered Coin Solves A Vermont Numismatic Enigma", A.N.S., New York, 1958 pages 536-537.

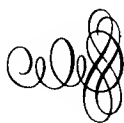
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- Editor's Note: If we were to classify this as a Multiple Offset Strike as defined on sequential page 322 in the May 1971 issue of CNL, this would be an MOS Type B. Its production could have been either accidental or intentional. If accidental, the coin would have hung to the upper die and been overlooked by the operator as he placed a fresh planchet on the lower die, and then dropped loose in a shifted position as the upper die descended for the next strike. If intentional, it would have been held by the operator in the desired position relative to the upper die, the blank planchet serving to protect the dies against clashing if they should tilt during the offset strike.

JCS

LETTERS

and TECHNICAL NOTES    □ □ □



A Collection of Observations  
on TN-31  
"A Biennial Pairing Puzzle"  
(CNL p.335; Sept.1971)



((1)) from Walter H. Breen      (TN-31A)

In TN-31, Richard Buckley has - like Miller before him - been deceived by similarities originating in the hub. Mailed Bust Left obverses of 1785 & 1786 in general show no discernible differences of workmanship or spacing. (The "Hercules Head" was originally from the same hub but was drastically recut.) What differences do exist - punctuation, absence or presence of berries, smooth or partially serrated leaves, coarse rather than the hub's fine dentils - must be ascribed to hand finishing. This was a necessary procedure, as the regular striking press, when fitted with an obverse hub opposite a working die blank, could produce at best only a weak impression given the power available; much more force is required to sink a die from a hub of even that diameter than to strike a coin from a die, if only because even soft steel is harder than copper and the amount of displacement in the die blank needed to sink the design in any clarity is far greater than that needed to raise it on the copper.

The method was nevertheless standardized for Connecticut after 1785; the proprietors' early experience with bust right coins of that year showed that hand engraving the several hundred dies necessary would be prohibitively difficult. A complete hub for obverse is found only for 1786; the Mailed and Draped Busts of 1787-88 appear to have come from individual puncheons, the lettering having to be added by hand, most likely just because of the unsatisfactory results of 1786. (For evidence on this point, look at obverse 33.6 of 1787, in which not only are there three fillet ends, but many other details are doubled). Yet the lettering differs in its spacing, size and punctuation on the 1787-88 Draped Busts.)

In other words, the very evidence that convinced Buckley that 1787 7.2 and 1786 5.2 are the same -- the measurements -- become equally convincing evidence of the use of a complete hub for these obverses. And - we have already met with the story that this 1786 hub - now too worn to be of much help - was finally given to the younger Buel when he went off to Vermont; presumably he softened it, ground off the AUCTORI CONNEC, and used it to sink the Vermont obverses now known as Ryder 10 and 11.

Interestingly enough, parallels can be found in the early history of the Philadelphia Mint. A complete hub was used for three reverses of the 1794 half cent because the detailed engraving of the two obverses and three reverses of 1793 had taken too much time. As a result, the Gilbert 1=5, 3=8 and 9 reverses of 1794 show no difference in leaf placement or spacing -- only differences of hand finishing; but the experiment was abandoned, not to be revived until 1837 on large cents, by which time steam power was available. (Heads and wreaths were hubbed from 1793 on in some denominations, of course; but through 1797 even they frequently received hand finishing changes, notably in poles and berries, and as late as 1806 for some details of wreaths.)

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((2)) from Robert J. Lindesmith; Dayton, Washington (TN-31B)

Mr. Buckley's comments in TN-31 clearly indicate the possibility that Abel Buell used a master hub in the production of a number of 1786 Connecticut obverse dies. I find it very difficult to believe that the damaged 7.2 die was ground down and reworked; I suspect that in order to eliminate the severe die damage at the back of the neck as well as the type of letter damage indicated by E of CONNEC one would have to grind away practically all traces of the original design. In this case, I am sure that reworking the die would produce obvious variations.

The Editor's Note that "the denticulation above the bust and around toward the three o'clock position is identical on both dies" in addition to Buckley's comment that "measurements from various points on the legend to other points match exactly on the coins", certainly provides strong support for the theory that a master hub was used in the production of the 5.2 die. It would be a simple matter to add the colons to the die prior to hardening.

Rather interestingly, one will also note that the position of the letters of AUCTORI and CONNEC in relation to the bust appears to be the same on a number of the 1786 obverse dies. If letter punches were used to add the legend to each die one would expect to find noticeable variations, such as are found on the Connecticut 1787 obverse dies. Minor variations of the 1786 obverse dies could be attributed to the hubbing process and retouching of the individual dies.

Mr. Buckley's observation that his specimen of 5.2-1 was "struck from a very shallow die" also appears to hold true in respect to impressions struck from a number of the 1786 obverse dies. This could indicate that the die sinker had problems in hubbing complete dies and probably represents the reason why he returned to the use of a head-punch in the production of 1787 dies. Evidently for technical reasons it is easier to use a head-punch and then complete the dies with the use of letter, numeral and ornamental punches.

The comment on the shallow die has an interesting relationship to impressions struck from dies that were produced via the hubbing method from rusted, worn and damaged Scoville Patriotic Civil War dies. Besides the shallow impressions (possibly the result of a poor hubbing job) it is obvious in at least one case the hub was reworked in order to eliminate some of the damage. Thus while there are obvious variations in the impressions struck from the original and from the hubbed die, the relative positions of the letters, ornaments and beaded border remain the same. My research on these dies produced by the Scoville Manufacturing Company of Waterbury, Connecticut certainly has an interesting bearing on this subject.

While it would require a study of all the 1786 obverse 4 and 5 dies to determine for certain whether a master hub was used, I would suspect that an obverse 4 die was used to raise the master hub.

As a result of my statements above, I have taken it for granted the past year that the 1786 Connecticut hubs contained the legends, I find it rather interesting that Mr. Edward R. Barnsley's article in CNL NO. 34 ( May, 1972) on "The Bizarre Lettering of Connecticut Coppers" contains the following quote: "Without a doubt some legends were entirely hand carved into the dies. Good examples of this category are the obverse 5's of 1786." The following represents a partial listing of my reasons why:

- (1) If the legends were entirely hand carved into twelve different obverse 5 dies, it is extremely doubtful that the position of each letter would appear to be the same on all the dies. This also includes the obverse 4 dies.
- (2) My study of the Fugio patterns and hubs leads me to believe that Abel Buell used a hub (with legend AUCTORI CONNEC) in the preparation of obverse 4 and 5 dies.
- (3) The contrast between the two adjacent N's in the twelve similar obverse dies appears to be extremely close to the same on all dies. The majority of the variations I feel sure can be attributed to the die sinkers efforts to improve the impressions struck from the obverse 5 hub. If the legends were entirely hand carved into the dies, I find it hard to believe that this similar contrast would exist on so many dies.
- (4) If you check the reverse dies that were struck in combination with the obverse 5's you will note the same contrast between the E of INDE and the E of ET. This leads me to believe that the reverse hub also contained the legend INDE ET LIB. I find no similar contrasts in the 1787 Connecticut obverse 33 and 37 die combinations.

- (5) The evidence that hubs without legends were used in the preparation of 1787 Connecticut dies clearly indicates that they could have run into problems with the 1786 hubs. Thus while it is obvious that the majority of the dies were reworked to some extent after being hubbed, this represents the major reason for the additional handwork on the legends of the obverse 5 dies. This would obviously give the impression that the legend was hand carved into twelve obverse dies.
- (6) With reference once more to the information in TN-31 I believe it is evident that the only logical answer to the similarity between 5.2 of 1786 and 7.2 of 1785 can be simply explained if the two dies were the end result of an obverse 5 hub (or possibly I should say obverse 4 hub as the hub lacked colons which explains why their position varies on the different obverse 5 dies.) It would be a simple task for the die sinker to add colons or any other ornaments to the various dies sunk from this obverse hub. Thus while it is possible that the legend was hand carved on the 1786 hubs or the dies (intaglio matrix) used to raise the hubs, it is quite a different matter to state that the legend was hand carved into each die sunk from the hubs. I also suspect that this hub also contained the 1786 date, but lack enough good study specimens to be certain on this point.

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((3)) from Ye Editor (TN-31C)

When Richard Buckley first sent us his letter which we later published as TN-31 "A Biennial Pairing Puzzle", we were reasonably certain that this was not actually a biennial pairing situation, nor that of an altered die, but instead dealt with the question of a master hub having all lettering, the central device and the dentiles on the hub (but without punctuation or ornamentation).

While researching this question we discovered Walter Breen's observation in his booklet "Dies and Coinage" (pages 15 & 16) published in 1962 by Robert Bashlow Co., that Abel Buell's dies for the 1786 Mailed Bust Left Connecticut coppers had been produced by such a process; however, Walter offered no supporting data for his claim.

As we have continued to pursue this question we have concluded that Abel Buell did, in fact, do considerable experimentation with unconventional diesinking techniques. Our studies tend to support the comments expressed above by both Walter Breen and Robert Lindesmith, and suggest further that a considerable number of obverse Connecticut dies may have had their genesis in a single complex master hub. These include the obverse 7's and 8's of 1785; the 4's and most (perhaps all) of the 5's of 1786; and 7 of 1787.



As Walter Breen indicates, the force necessary to sink a complex working hub into a die blank is substantially greater than that required for coining. This would have required the use of a press having greater capacity than any believed available at that time. However, there is evidence of flow patterns in the fields of some Connecticut coppers which suggests that Buell may have solved this problem by a method of hot-forging his dies -- that is to say, the die blanks may have been at almost a red-yellow heat at the moment the hubs were sunk into them. An obvious disadvantage in the process would be the thermal shock to the working hub. We would anticipate severe damage to the areas of fine detail -- such as the lettering -- should the hub not be quickly withdrawn from the hot die blank, and this might account for the extensive rework to letters on some of these dies.

There can be little question that Abel Buell possessed the ability to develop such a process, and it certainly would have occurred to him as a natural extension of his experience in type founding. It is evident that the generally accepted idea that coinage dies of the "Colonial" American era were all individually hand-crafted -- one device, one letter, one ornament at a time -- requires reconsideration.

This hand-crafted die syndrome has existed almost universally until the present time. Many dies are unquestionably of this sort, but now we begin to see evidence that some are not; however, very little attention has been devoted to this aspect of early American numismatics. Perhaps we should call attention to Edward R. Barnsley's final sentence in his first conclusion (page 363) in his "Bizarre Lettering" article in the past issue .... "This does not preclude the probability that all or parts of certain dies may have been duplicated by a hubbing process."

Very little attention has been given to another aspect -- the method of manufacture of the tools, letter puncheons for example, used in diesinking of this era. Yet the coinage presents much evidence permitting this sort of determination. An example is the Fugio "F" found on some Connecticut coppers as well as most of the Fugio Cents. This "F" puncheon was not a single tool but was many almost identical tools all raised from an intaglio matrix which became defective during use. A discussion of this Fugio F will be included in the next of ye editor's "Comments on the Fugio Cents of 1787" in a future issue.

JCS



## MORE THOUGHTS ON THE X-RATED COINAGE.

( RF-34A )

● Richard Picker; Albertson, New York

I have seen this X mark on several rare coins but I do not recall all of them. One was a Massachusetts Cent of 1787 with the arrows transposed that was in a Stack sale a good many years ago, and the Newcomb 14b which you illustrated. The 14b is probably the finest known of that obverse because Newcomb used it in his plate for that variety (see The U.S. Cents 1801-2-3, H.R.Newcomb). BUT - he never mentioned that it was a beautiful brockage (which may account for its X rating. JCS). I have always assumed that this was a collectors identification mark, with the possibility in mind that it might also have been the mark of a museum, but I have never been able to pin it down since every piece that I have seen seems to have lost its prior pedigree. The 14b came out of a Schulman sale a good number of years ago, I think when he and Kriesburg had just started to run joint sales here in the East.

The Newcomb book was done in 1925 and there is no way of knowing whether it was his coin or just borrowed for the book. Newcomb gave credit to the following collectors for allowing him to study and photograph their coins: Henry Hines, Dr. George French, William Festus Morgan, Hillyer Ryder and George Clapp. However, he does not give credit for each coin so we do not know from which collection it came. It appeared next in the Downing sale (A.N.A. 1952) and carried the pedigree ex Proskey, Hines (lot #1961). Later in this same sale (lot 2194) there appeared an 1839 Cent, Newcomb 11, with the same X and pedigreed ex Hines. Hines was too sophisticated a collector to have made these marks, but he evidently recognized and acquired good coins even though they had the damage. I shall attempt to contact Dr. Sheldon, who knew Hines very well, and see if he can shed any light on this subject.



## Editor's note:

We regret the poor printing of photographs in the last issue - the X marks were difficult to see although they were quite clear in the photographic prints. Two of our printers have recently gone out of business and we have not yet located another capable of producing good quality halftones. JCS

